Countries Visited by High-powered Indian Delegations

1733. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINSITER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of countries visited by the high-powered Indian delegations after the assumption of Power by new Government at the Centre;

(b) whether any memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by Indian side, if so, with which country; and

(c) what are the area-wise details and present stage of progress (project-wise) and estimated cost involved therein in each case?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (c) information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

NAM meet in Columbia

1734. SHRI S. M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Non-Alignment Meet (NAM) was,recently held in Colombia, if so, the outcome thereof;

(b) the extent to which Government have been able to convince fellow countries on recent nuclear tests and the situation arising out of the sanctions imposed on India by different countries; and

(c) the response Government got from other countries on the issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of the Non-Aligned countries met in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 19-20 May, 1998 to prepare the Movement for the summit to be held in Durban, South Africa in September 1998 and to consider issues of major importance for the Movement including global political, social and economic issues. A Communique was issued at the end of this meeting giving the position of the Movement on the issues discussed.

(b) At the NAM meeting in Colombia, Government have informed the member countries of the rationale underlying the decision to authorise the nuclear tests.

(c) The Communique issued at the end of the NAM meeting does not contain any reference to India-'s nuclear tests.

Indo-US Talks

1735. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether High-level Indo-US strategic talks were recently held in the Capital;

(b) if so, what are the main issues discussed with the U.S. team; and

(c) what is the response received on the issue raised by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (c) yes Sir. India and the United States have been engaged in a wide-ranging dialogue on bilateral rcgionai and global issues intended to broaden and deepen our mutually-beneficial relations and identify areas of cooperation. Cooperation in some areas including science and technology and environment, health and energy have been discussed as part of this wide-ranging dialogue.

Repeal of pressler law

1736. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of US proposal to repeal the Pressler Law;

(b) if so, what are the implications involved in it so far as the country's interests are concerned; and

(c) what is the reaction of Government with regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASDNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes Sir. There were media reports that, in order to dissuade Pakistan from conducting nuclear tests, US would after military and economic assistance to Pakistan currently restricted under the domestic laws namely, the Pressler Amendment. A draft bill to repeal the Pressler Amendment was introduced in the US Senate.

(b) and (c) Docs not arise. Pakistan has since conducted nuclear tests. The draft bill has been withdrawn. US has announced sanctions against Pakistan additional to those contained in Pressler Amendment.

Entry into seas and air space

1737. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether as reported in the States man of February 11, 1998, USA has challenged the alleged "excessive claim" of India and 20 other countries about entry into the seas and air space; and

(b) if so, what precise claim about entry into the seas and air space have been made by India and what is the response of the US and other world powers thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) The news item in the Statesman of February 11, 1998 refers to the Annual Report of the US Department of Defence to the US President and Congress. At Appendix-1 captioned "Freedom of Navigation", the Report states that for 18 years the US Freedom of Navigation Programme has ensured that "excessive coastal State claims" going beyond the limits permitted under the UN Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS), over the world's oceans and air space arc repeatedly challenged by the United States by diplomatic protests and "operational assertions". In the financial year 1997 (Oct'96-Scpt'97), the US targeted 21 countries, including India, where it carried out such "operational assertions". In the case of India, the alleged excessive claim relates to the requirement of "prior permission for warship to enter the territorial sea".

Under Section 4 of the Indian Maritime Zones Act, 1976, the entry/ passage of foreign warships and submarines through the territorial waters of India may take place after giving prior notice to the Government of India. The requirement of prior notice in case of warships is fully in consonance with the relevant provisions of UNCLOS relating to the definition of innocent passage as also the right of coastal States to enact laws and regulations with regard to the entry of warships. The requirement of prior notice neither denies nor impairs the right of innocent passage of warships through the territorial waters of India.

Functioning of Indian Council of World Affairs

1738. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to ' state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the distinguished role played by the Indian Council of World Affairs in pro-viding input to foreign policy making in the country;

(b) if so, if the Government are also aware of the present pitiable condition of the organisation in terms of absence of democratic functioning, norms for the employees' service condition and emoluments, condition of the library, etc.; and

(c) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken to correct the situation?